

Preserving the past

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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PE Station receives repairs.

Jim Hudson slides mortar onto a trowel and carefully smears it on the outside of a historic building.

Historic, in this case, is an understatement as the Midway Station on the Pony Express Route was built more than a 150 years ago—years before Nebraska became a state in 1867.

That's why it's important to Larry and Jan (Williams) Gill and the Williams family to preserve the ancient structure built to house French fur traders, used by Pony Express riders and later a ranch hand bunkhouse before it was turned into a museum by appointment and for special occasions.

"I don't know if another Pony Express Station on the original site has been under the control of the same family since the 1870s," Gill said.

Gill said he remembers his father-in-law Bob Williams commissioning repairs to the station when Williams returned from World War II in the 1940s.

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“Bob and Janice Williams were very dedicated to preserving the station,” Gill said. “I remember them trying to keep everything going.”

In fact, he also recalled—with a laugh—how Janice would get after him to keep weeds away from the station.

Since Gill became the 96 Ranch manager in 1973, the station was restored at least once by brick layer and plasterer George Olson.

Gill said he hired Hudson for the job this time because “Jim knows how to do everything.”

Hudson said he searched the Internet to learn how to correctly mix the mortar and apply it to the joints of the building.

Before that process, however, Hudson knocks out

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